

Noise Commission – 16 Dec. 2004, 11:00 Coleman Barracks

Herrn Erhard Schäfer (Amtsleiter Ordnungsamt)
Herr Bgm. Erich Maier - Lampertheim

Herr Guenter Gerbich; (Stv. Amtsleiter, Ordnungsamt) Frankenthal

City of Mannheim

Herr Bürgermeister Lothar Quast
Frau Regina Reich
Herr Josef Krah
Herr Wolfram Weber

US participants

LTC Sturgeon, 293rd BSB Cdr
LTC Diaz, 1-214th Avn Cdr
LTC Long, USAADE
MAJ Gloede, XO, 2-502nd Avn
MAJ Werner, S3, 2-502nd Avn
Dr. Cochrane, USLFO BW
Mr. Schulze, Asst. USLFO BW
Mr. Connors, GRA, 26th ASG
Ms. Foley, Chief, Environmental Branch, DPW
Mr. Gebreyohannes, Environmental Branch, DPW
Ms. Gebhard, Chief, PAO, 293rd BSB
Mr. Heppner, PA Specialist, 293rd BSB
Safety Officer, 1-214th Aviation

Introductions

(Gebhard) Purpose of forum is to discuss any issues revolving around noise emission and to find mutual solutions that are acceptable to everyone. Intent is to determine the military and civilian requirements and to find a balancing factor for both. A further goal is to exchange information on US and Host Nation noise management methods.

(Quast) Mayor Quast is grateful that the commission has been initiated with the participation of the cities affected. This has long been the desire of local residents. Lessons learned from the Heidelberg noise commission will be incorporated. The forum will attempt to understand the structure and operations that affect or cause noise emission. The forum will also be able to discuss public issues, complaints, and the possibilities of finding mutually acceptable resolutions. This will also help to strengthen and improve the mutual understanding of the issues.

(Gerbich) Mr. Gerbich is also grateful that the commission has been founded so that issues will become more transparent. Frankenthal is only affected on the perimeter with Moersch near one of the flight approach paths to Coleman. Gerbich would like to use the forum to present issues as they arise but also use the opportunity to explain military requirements to local residents. Gerbich noted that the airfield in Worms also has issues of potential concern. Gerbich indicates that the number of complaints in Frankenthal has actually gone down tremendously. There was only one complaint in May 2004 and the Public Affairs Office prepared a response. The issue could have been related to ongoing election campaigns at the time.

(Maier) Mayor Maier expressed that the noise commission was a very positive initiative to offensively attack the issues. Maier noted that it is of primary importance to sustain what has been developed with Ms. Gebhard's Public Affairs Office in terms of information exchange. In particular, it is important to address those issues that deviate from normal operations so that this information can be provided to local residents. This helps the city respond to questions that are sometimes viewed very subjectively by local residents. Since Maier resides in Lampertheim, he noted that one of his concerns rests with the area of Lampertheim where the majority of the citizens' groups are active. From Maier's perspective, admitting that he may have a higher tolerance level, it has been his experience that the situation has greatly improved in the last 25 years. That, however, is viewed differently by each individual. Maier stressed the importance of being included in these discussions and that the forum had been initiated. He further noted that the exchange of information in a non-bureaucratic manner was an important preventive measure and the fundamentally positive aspect of the direction we were moving in.

(LTC Diaz) This was Diaz's first experience with a noise commission. As a commander of US soldiers in Germany, he is charged with a mission that includes training. This is a "real world" mission that involves training of soldiers throughout Europe and Southwest Asia on a daily and weekly basis. In his missions and training, Diaz emphasized that he operates within the current agreements between the US and Germany. Diaz reviews the flight schedules daily to head off areas that might become a concern or those missions that in his opinion might "stretch" the intent of the agreements between Germany and the US. If he sees a conflict, he may cancel the flight. Diaz wanted the members of the forum to know that not just US helicopters are operating in the area. He is a resident of Benjamin Franklin Village and has ownership of most of the helicopters at Coleman. When he hears one overhead, Diaz is looking to identify the aircraft and knows all of its ID numbers. In many cases, he will see a news, hospital, or German Army helicopter. Noise is not exclusively a US issue. Diaz noted that a lay person may see a helicopter and immediately assume it is a US aircraft because we operate more in the area. He indicated that he had been in

Germany for one year and that it had been one of the best years in his military career. Diaz expressed the hope that he could stay on another 5 years.

(Quast) Mayor Quast noted that the meeting should be considered as a preparatory or “constitutional” meeting

(Diaz) LTC Diaz addressed his expectations and that issues should not be brought directly to the commission for decision, but rather be farmed out to working groups or committees for research and appropriate preparation.

(LTC Sturgeon apologized for late arrival due to a disciplinary board that took longer than expected)

(Cochrane) Dr. Cochrane noted that noise commissions are nothing new and military communities that have an airfield have such forums. Noise commissions are governed by US Army regulation. Heidelberg is one example. Cochrane suggested that Mr. Schulze provide an overview of the regulation, membership, frequency of meetings, etc.

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze noted that locations of meetings are not specified in the regulation and recommended that future meetings be held at Coleman unless circumstances dictated that the session be held at another location.

(Quast) Mayor Quast noted that it was not so important where the meetings are held but that they are held. He added that he enjoyed coming to Coleman Barracks.

(Gebhard) Ms. Gebhard asked the representatives from Frankenthal and Lampertheim if this was ok with them.

(Maier) Mayor Maier stated that for purposes of public transparency, meetings should occasionally be held off-post.

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze stated that the Bundeswehr has a requirement for annual meetings. The US Army regulation (UR 95-1) requires two per year, usually in October and April. The intent is to discuss summer night flying operations in April and discuss the experiences/issues at the October meeting.

(Cochrane) Dr. Cochran noted that the regulation does not preclude additional meetings should issues arise.

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze stated that the commission is chaired either by the BSB commander or the commander of the resident aviation unit. Chairmanship by the BSB commander allows other community noise issues to be addressed by the commission.

(Quast) Mayor Quast was pleased that the question was being addressed since the issue had been raised by representatives from Sandhofen.

(LTC Sturgeon) LTC Sturgeon adds that she has her environmental staff in place to respond to those types of issues.

(Gebhard) Ms. Gebhard summarizes that the forum headed by BSB commander can address various issues such as LTA noise problems or noise issues at other installations (such as weapons training at Turley).

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze asked whether the communities of Scharhof, Blumenau, and Sandhofen fall under the Lord Mayor and city of Mannheim.

(Gebhard) Ms. Gebhard confirms that they fall under Mannheim.

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze states that the membership should include the following:

1. Chairperson
2. Representative from the Air Traffic Control unit
3. Representative from SJA
4. Representative from Public Affairs
5. Representatives from units stationed at the airfield and Airfield Operations
6. Representatives from affected communities
7. State representative
8. County representative
9. Representative from USFLO
10. Representative from higher headquarters
11. Representatives from other units with an interest in the airfield such as the Air Force
12. Bundeswehr representative

(Connors) Mr. Connors asks whether it is necessary to include state representatives since we have 3 that would be involved.

(Group) Agrees that state representatives should only be invited on an "as needed" basis.

(Cochrane) Dr. Cochrane agrees that state officials can be invited as required. He adds that it is a good idea to include SJA since they have legal experience from other airfield locations.

(Quast) Mayor Quast proposes that representatives of the City Council and District Representatives be included in the membership as suggested in the previous correspondence from the US Army, so that these representatives can

address issues directly rather than through other administrative representatives. Mayor Quast notes that they were included in the Heidelberg Noise Commission.

(Connors) Mr. Connors expresses the concern that the bigger the noise commission becomes, the less work will be accomplished. He suggests that they should only be invited on a “as need” basis or when they have an issue to present in order to minimize the membership in the commission.

(Quast) Mayor Quast points out that the public acceptance and credibility would be enhanced by including these individuals and that this was, in fact, proposed by the US Army in their 26 May 2004 letter (LTC Miller).

(Maier) Mayor Maier notes that there appear to be a large number of US representatives on the commission. From his perspective, county or State of Hessen representatives don't need to be included. It would be sufficient to have a representative from the city administration. Mayor Maier, however, believes it is important to include a representative from the citizen's groups. Beyond that, Maier agrees that the smaller the numbers, the more efficient the commission will be. The forum could be expanded if the need should arise. Obviously the city of Mannheim has a bigger role and consequently will have more representation. Mayor Maier insures that it will not be the intent of Lampertheim to follow suit with a larger group of representatives on the commission.

(LTC Sturgeon) LTC Sturgeon suggests that perhaps one of the two meetings could include the expanded membership so that they could see how business was conducted or raise issues.

(Quast) Mayor Quast proposed that the larger group should meet in April and then find a consensus on who would be part of the regular membership. If we already begin restricting membership at the administrative level at this stage, then we can anticipate problems because the expectation level is so high.

(Gerbich) Mr. Gerbich also thinks a small group would be more efficient and concurs with Mayor Maier's comments.

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze states that with the consent of the commission, subject matter experts can be invited, associations such as the “Bundesvereinigung gegen Fluglaerm” (Federal Association Opposing Aircraft Noise) or other citizens' initiatives. Schulze notes that emotions can run high when these groups are in attendance. The most effective commissions are those that operate at a rational and logical level.

(Quast) Mayor Quast notes that the proposal by LTC Diaz to adequately prepare for the meetings and provide background material should help in diffusing the emotional component. Mayor Quast states that he has received a letter from the Sandhofen Citizens' group representative, Mr. Siegholt. With Siegholt's

permission, Mayor Quast would provide the commission a copy so that they will have an idea of what the expectations are. That would help us to get to the core of the central issues at the next meeting more quickly.

(Krah) Mr. Krah stated that Mannheim has three citizens' initiatives and they should coordinate amongst themselves who will be the represent their interests at main session.

(Maier) Mayor Maier signal his approval for a similar coordination in Lampertheim. Maier points out that it would be a difficult challenge to explain to Mr. Kerkhoff why he could not attend the Noise Commission meeting.

(Connors) Mr. Connors adds that these representatives should be informed that they are not regular members of the noise commission, just attendees at the larger session.

(Maier) Mayor Maier expresses his misgivings if we already begin the exclusion process, creating another opposition front and mistrust. He states that the commission also has the responsibility to address the concerns of these groups. Maier suggests that it might be strategically wiser to include these representatives as regular members of the noise commission.

(Quast) Mayor Quast suggests one primary meeting per year and the second meeting at the working group or operational level.

(Connors) Mr. Connors adopts the suggestion and indicates that this is what he meant. He adds that citizen groups sometimes have their own agenda.

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze clarifies that members of the commission from Mannheim, Lampertheim, and Frankenthal are elected representatives whereas representatives from the citizens' groups are not elected, nor do they have a large mandate. The legal question it raises is whether such representatives should be part of the decision-making process in such a commission. Mr. Schulze would oppose or recommend against their full membership.

(Quast) Mayor Quast suggests using the term "guest members" so that they can be included and avoid potential problems.

(Maier) Mayor Maier adds that these representatives are important and constitute a major reason why we have a noise commission in the first place. He goes on to state that they do have a participatory right as citizens and certainly represent a part of the community.

(Connors) Mr. Connors summarizes that the commission should be as inclusive as possible. Whatever inefficiencies there might be, these can be overcome by a well-prepared agenda that allows an efficiently run meeting.

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze asks for clarification on whether we are talking about participation or attendance.

(LTC Sturgeon) LTC Sturgeon states that representatives are expected to identify their issues to the commission administration in advance, allowing time for research, but we do allow the representatives a voice.

(Schulze) Mr. Schulze comments that we are basically building a Town Hall Meeting.

(LTC Sturgeon) LTC Sturgeon explains that we will have to manage that with the agenda. She explains her concern that there is a risk of excluding someone and thereby causing more misunderstanding. We achieve some efficiency by being inclusive.

(LTC Long) LTC Long refers to the earlier proposal that items will only be considered for the agenda that have been submitted in advance. He adds that many of the items will require research on his part. LTC Long recommends that we stick to the agenda items posted in advance, allowing time for research rather than an open town hall forum.

(LTC Sturgeon) LTC Sturgeon adds that everyone on the commission has an opportunity to raise an issue and get it on the agenda, not to just come and watch. If new issues are presented, they will be tabled to the next session.

(Gebhard) Ms. Gebhard summarizes and adds that Public Affairs also needs time to translate the info and get it distributed. She asks the group when we should solicit for topics for the April meeting.

(Quast) Mayor Quast suggests that in preparation for the April meeting, we report on the formation of the commission and set a deadline for the submission of topics.

(Gebhard) Ms Gebhard summarizes that an invitation letter should be prepared in January, preferably 6 weeks out, with the invitation and a request for topics.

(Maier) Mayor Maier indicates that he has to depart in 5 minutes and would like to agree on a date for the April meeting.

(Group) 7 April at 16:30 is agreed upon as the primary date with 6 April as the alternate.

(Gerbich) Mr. Gerbich thanks the members for the invitation and comments that we are moving in the right direction and extends his wishes for a happy new year.

The meeting is adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Transcribed & edited by: Sieg Heppner, 293rd BSB Public Affairs Office.